



### Top Stories



**Nationalist Party wins Taiwan election**

### Shimon Peres discusses the future of Israel

Shimon Peres, President of Israel, discusses Iran, the Palestinian peace process and Israeli culture in an exclusive interview with



David Shankbone.  
[http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Shimon\\_Peres\\_discusses\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_Israel](http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Shimon_Peres_discusses_the_future_of_Israel)

### Wikipedia Current Events

A tanker crash, explosion and fire in Port Harcourt, Nigeria leaves at least 30 dead.

•A collision near Bathurst, New Brunswick results in the deaths of 7 Bathurst High School basketball team members.

•Republic of China legislative election, 2008: The Kuomintang (KMT) and its coalition allies win a landslide victory over the Democratic Progressive Party, garnering 86 of 113 seats in the Legislative Yuan.

### Delta Air Lines may enter merge talks with Northwest or United Airlines



Delta Air Lines may enter merge discussions with one of two other major United States air carriers - Northwest Airlines or United Airlines.

It is known that Chief Executive Richard Anderson has asked for authorisation to begin talks, and believed executives have held a meeting at which permission was sought to enter discussion with one of the two airlines, but the results are yet to be confirmed.

Ajc.com reported that airline spokesman Kent Landers refused to confirm even the existence of the meeting, saying "Delta has a longstanding policy not to comment on board meeting dates or agendas. Our board is working

with management to look at all strategic options to remain a leader in the industry, including potential consolidation transactions. [Delta] won't provide updates on the board's process."

The airline has been in exploratory talks with both Northwest and United since late 2007, and it is believed that the purpose of the New York meeting was to select which airline offered Delta the better deal and authorise moving talks on to the next level. If a deal goes ahead and survives regulatory checks and potential opposition from politicians and consumer advocates then a merge with either airline would be the biggest between two US airlines, and would result in the biggest airline in the world.

Rapidly rising costs in the aviation industry are driving airlines towards merges. In particular, the price of jet fuel jumped 58% in 2007, driven by the rapidly increasing price of oil. When Anderson joined Delta in early September, he commented that he was not interested in potential merge deals. However, as prices rise and shares fall for airlines, he publicly changed his stance to being open to Delta-led mergers. Shares in all three companies shot up amid the news of a potential deal, although they have begun falling again, and did not hit last year's highs. Delta has a current market value of around \$4.2 billion, less than half the amount US Airways offered last year in an attempt to buy Delta, which failed.

### Featured story

### 'No treaty withdrawal', says Lakota elder

The Lakota Freedom Delegation, which in December declared that the Lakota people were withdrawing from their treaties with the United States and reasserting their sovereignty as an independent state, is acting without the support of the Treaty Council, the traditional government of the Lakota, Wikinews has learned.

**Nationalist Party wins Taiwan election**

The Chinese Nationalist Party, also known as Kuomintang (KMT, traditional Chinese: 中國國民黨), has won today's elections in Taiwan against President Chen Shui-bian's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The DPP had previously ended half a century of Kuomintang rule in 2000 when President Chen was elected and won more seats than any other party in the 2001 election.



*The KMT flag*

The election can only be described as a landslide win for the KMT, winning more than 70% of all the seats in the 113 seats parliament while the DPP only managed to gain just under 25%. Reuters is reporting 86 seats for the KMT while AFP is reporting 82 seats.

"I am willing to shoulder all of the responsibility," President Chen was quoted as saying at a press conference. He resigned as the chairman of the Democratic Progressive Party immediately.



*Voting hours*

The Kuomintang is part of the Pan-Blue coalition along with the People First Party and Chinese New Party. As a coalition they stand for reunification with China, which the Democratic Progressive

Party opposes. The Democratic Progressive Party is a member of the Pan green coalition which stands for Taiwanese independence from the People's Republic of China. Taiwan calls itself the Republic of China; however, it is only recognized by few states and is officially seen as part of the People's Republic of China by most, though it is generally recognized as a de facto independent nation.

**Protests mark anniversary of Guantanamo detention center**



*A protester in front of the Supreme Court, Washington DC - Image: takomabibelot.*

The human rights group Amnesty International staged protests around the world yesterday to mark the sixth anniversary of the first arrival of detainees at the U.S. detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The group is demanding the prison be shut down. Meanwhile, a U.S. appeals court in Washington has ruled against four British men who allege they were tortured during their detention at Guantanamo.

Amnesty International, the American Civil Liberties Union and other rights organizations used the anniversary to again call on the Bush administration to close down the Guantanamo facility. A crowd of about 200 protesters, many dressed in orange jumpsuits similar to the ones worn by Guantanamo prisoners, gathered in the pouring rain in Washington, D.C. yesterday. Around 80 were thought to have been arrested, as protests are forbidden in the area surrounding the courts. Larry Cox, the Executive Director of Amnesty

International USA said Guantanamo has become a symbol.

"It's become the symbol of everything that's wrong with the U.S. approach to fighting terror and making people safer," said Cox. "It's become a symbol of human rights abuses, it's become the symbol of things which deviate so grossly from the values that this country has always upheld that people are horrified and shocked."

Amnesty also staged protests Friday in the Philippines, Sweden, Paraguay, Bahrain, Ireland and Israel. Major events included a gathering outside the American embassy in London, UK and a walking protest through the streets of Sydney, Australia



*Protesters kneeling in front of the Supreme Court, Washington DC - Image: takomabibelot.*

President Bush and several senior members of his administration have repeatedly said they would like to close Guantanamo down, but there is the question of how to make sure the terrorist suspects detained there do not return to target the United States if handed back to their countries of origin.

Defence Secretary Robert Gates said last month there has not been much progress in efforts to close the prison down because of legal concerns in Congress.

Amnesty's Larry Cox says his organization has worked out an action plan to close it, which has been endorsed by lawmakers from 30 countries.

"There is an easy answer to this, which is to shut down Guantanamo, to put people into U.S. detention centres, to charge them if they're guilty of crimes, they should be charged, and to bring them to trial," said Cox. "And to let other people, either go back, if they can, to their countries or to get asylum in other countries."

Democratic Senator Tom Harkin has introduced legislation that would close the detention centre and restore due process to the detainees, but it is not clear if and when it will come to the floor for debate.

Meanwhile, a U.S. appeals court in Washington, D.C. has thrown out a lawsuit filed by four British ex-prisoners who say they were systematically tortured during their two-year detention at Guantanamo Bay. The four plaintiffs are all British nationals and residents, who were released from Guantanamo in 2004.

The U.S. Supreme Court is currently considering another case that involves other prisoners still at Guantanamo Bay and if they have a right to challenge their confinement in U.S. courts.

**Nigerian fuel tanker explosion leaves at least 30 dead**

A fuel tanker explosion in Nigeria has left at least 30 dead. The disaster occurred near a busy bus station in Port Harcourt.

Port Harcourt is located in an oil rich area, and is the central point of the Nigerian oil industry, which has a value of billions of US Dollars. It is consequently a regular target for extremists, but a police spokesman said terrorism is not believed to be a factor.

According to CNN, the same spokesman said a car's driver lost control whilst being chased by police, striking the tanker and triggering the explosion. However, AFP reports that the tanker itself was being chased for carrying



*A map of Nigeria, the red dot shows the area where the incident took place*

stolen petrol, and said the vehicle overturned after hitting a barricade on a partially

constructed section of road in a bid to escape. The Associated Press (AP) makes no mention of a police chase, and says the lorry overturned after suffering a blowout.

The crash occurred at a major junction in Eleme district. Fuel was spilled over cars and shop entrances before igniting. Local shop owner Matthew Eliagwu described the disaster to AP: "I heard a loud bang and I came out of my shop. I saw fire running down towards my shop, but I escaped. It was impossible to help anyone, because I had to run for my life."

At least 15 vehicles are known to have been destroyed, ten of which were buses, as well as 20 shops. Most victims are believed to be street vendors in the vicinity of the tanker at the time. It took hours for firefighters to bring the flames under control. At present no figures are available for numbers of injuries, but at least 30 are dead.

AFP reports that although no arrests have yet been confirmed, local residents placed the tanker's driver amongst the survivors and

said he was receiving treatment in a local hospital.

Nigeria is the world's eighth-largest exporter of crude oil, although violence has caused this to be reduced by over a quarter. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has claimed responsibility for a series of recent attacks, including one aimed at four ships in the Bonny Channel - the nation's largest oil and gas terminal - and an explosion and fire yesterday on a seagoing oil tanker berthed in Port Harcourt's sea terminal.

Fuel tanker and pipeline explosions are common in Nigeria, often triggered by looters. Just eleven days ago, on January 1, another fuel tanker rolled over and caught fire in Port Harcourt, destroying dozens of shops and houses, although there were no fatalities. In March 2007 an overturned tanker in Kaduna State exploded whilst being targeted by looters, killing 93.

Accidents are common as the country's roads are inadequately maintained, as are many of the vehicles that use them. Death tolls are often high because vendors crowd many major roadways.

**Report: UK schools advised not to upgrade to Vista**

Schools in the United Kingdom have been advised not to upgrade to the newest Microsoft products, Vista and Office 2007, according to a report by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA). Becta said that there were no "appropriate benefit" that would offset the additional cost and possible compatibility issues created by upgrading.

An agency of the UK department



for education and skills, Becta oversees the procurement of all IT equipment and e-learning solutions for schools.

One of the main reasons given is also compatibility, especially the new Microsoft document format OOXML (Office Open XML), a competitor to the ISO standard ODF (Open Document Format). The report says that "Microsoft should provide native support for the ODF file format increasingly used in competitor products and those that are free to use". Schools that do upgrade are advised not to use the OOXML format. Other reasons were that upgrading graphics hardware to support the new Windows Aero Graphics system used in Windows Vista, which would cost additional money according to PC World

The report also says that "Schools and colleges should make pupils, teachers and parents aware of the range of free-to-use products (such as office productivity suites) that are available, and how to use them". BECTA is not the first government institution to advise against upgrading to newer Microsoft products, media reports about a similar move by the Department of Transportation in the US were reported last year according to InformationWeek.

According to PC World, the cost of upgrading would be £175 million (US\$350 million), with a third of that going to Microsoft.

### **Bush says US troop build-up in Iraq has brought 'hope'**

US President George W. Bush says the so-called "surge" strategy in Iraq is working.

The President was speaking in Kuwait during one of several stops on a tour of the Middle East to

build support for his administration's efforts to stabilize Iraq and to contain Iran's growing influence in the region.

President Bush said the United States' change of strategy in Iraq has sharply reduced violence there and should allow the military to withdraw 20,000 troops on schedule by July this year.



*George Bush in Kuwait on Friday*

After meeting with his top military commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, Mr. Bush told reporters that hope is returning to Baghdad.

The president said he has made no decision on withdrawing more troops from Iraq. He said that will depend on recommendations by General Petraeus, who is due to report to Congress on that issue in March. A day earlier, the president told the NBC television network that U.S. troops could remain in Iraq for at least a decade.

Mr. Bush also called on Syria to cut what he called "the flow of terrorists" into Iraq. He accused Iran of supporting militias and extremist groups in Iraq, and urged it to stop.

Later, the president addressed a crowd of some 1,500 American troops at a U.S. military base in Kuwait.

"The history will say, it was when

you were called upon, you served, and the service you rendered was absolutely necessary to defeat an enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home," he said.

Mr. Bush said the troops were part of what he called "an ideological struggle" against "cold-blooded murderers" with a "hateful vision of a future."

In his speech Bush said "Iraq is now a different place from one year ago," and that "we [Americans] must do all we can to ensure that 2008 will bring even greater progress"

He said the best way to defeat an ideology of hate is with an ideology of hope, based on liberty.

"There is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed," he said. "There is no doubt in my mind when history was written, the final page will say: Victory was achieved by the United States of America for the good of the world; that by doing the hard work now, we can look back and say, the United States of America is more secure, and generations of Americans will be able to live in peace."

Kuwait is the most pro-U.S. country in the Arab world, but even so there is deep anxiety there about some U.S. policies in the Middle East. With a large Shi'ite population and a large U.S. troop presence, Kuwait is worried about the possibility of a U.S. military strike on Iran. The emirate has said it will not allow its territory to be used in such an attack. It is also concerned about a spillover of violence from neighboring Iraq.

After Kuwait, the president continues on to Bahrain,

headquarters of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. He will later visit the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt before returning to Washington next week.

### 'No treaty withdrawal', says Lakota elder



*The Lakota Freedom Delegation announcing their withdrawal on December 19. - Image: Naomi Archer.*

The Lakota Freedom Delegation, which in December declared that the Lakota people were withdrawing from their treaties with the United States and reasserting their sovereignty as an independent state, is acting without the support of the Treaty Council, the traditional government of the Lakota, Wikinews has learned.

Wikinews spoke with Floyd Looks-For-Buffalo Hand, an Oglala Lakota Treaty Delegate and Elder, also an author and a spiritual leader in the indigenous Lakota religion, and who is also blood uncle to Lakota Freedom Delegation member Canupa Gluha Mani.

The Lakota Freedom Delegation has claimed that, while the BIA-recognized tribal governments of the Lakota have not supported them, the Lakota Freedom Delegation's authority extends from support by the Treaty Council of the Elders of Lakota as well as from the 1974 International Indian Treaty Council.

"There was no treaty withdrawal. It was three people."

"Russell Means and Duane Martin [Canupa Gluha Mani] and that lady [Phyllis Young], they do not speak for the nation. You've got to have consensus" among the eight tribes of the Lakota, he said, which the Lakota Freedom Delegation has not obtained. Mr. Hand stated that he was speaking as a tribal delegate with the consensus of the Oglala Treaty Delegation and his chief, Oliver Red Cloud.

Hand furthermore called the treaty withdrawal event a "publicity stunt" and that furthermore the 1974 meeting was not authorization to act on behalf of the Lakota people. While Means, Canupa Gluha Mani, and the rest of the delegation "have free speech" and can do as they wish, he said, the Elders of Lakota "stated that they should remove themselves from treaty territory," that is, the Reservations inhabited by the Lakota. But "they're still living here" (Canupa Gluha Mani has been residing in Asheville, North Carolina since the treaty withdrawal press conference on 19 December).



*The Lakota independence movement claims large portions of the Great Plains region of the United States*

When asked if the above decisions represented the consensus of the whole Treaty Council, Hand stated, "we all do the same because we're all fullbloods. We all speak our own language."

Hand went on to explain, though, that the Treaty Council was

planning to reconsider the Lakota's arrangement with the United States government. The Treaty Council of all eight Lakota tribes, which will meet on 28-30 January 2008, will consider whether to "sit down to negotiate" with the federal government. Members of the Lakota Freedom Delegation are expected to take part in that meeting. European-Americans, Hand said, are "not honoring" the 1851 and 1868 treaties which connected the Lakota to the United States, and noted that the Lakota were the only people to "conquer" the United States during the Indian Wars of the 19th century.

The arrangement with the United States, which he called a "contract", "handcuffs us through the federal programs". On their own, Hand said, "if we rely on a sovereign nation as a nation, relating to other nations with our economic development I think we can survive." Hand noted that one possibility under consideration was asserting the right to negotiate independently of the US government with foreign powers in areas such as airport access rights. The Lakota, he said, would charge foreign airlines half what the United States charges to make use of airports on Lakota soil. "We can be well off," he argued.

In another contradiction of the Lakota Freedom Delegation's program, Hand said that the Treaty Delegations "don't want technology on our reservation".

However, his primary concern was environmentalism. People of European descent are "taking too much out of Mother Earth", he said, making reference to ongoing environmental effects of uranium mining which has long been a contentious issue on the Lakota reservations. The Treaty

Delegation's goal, he said, is "preserving the land and animals and letting the water remain free."

Hand also expressed hope for ethnic solidarity among the non-European peoples of the world. "All the people of color in this world will go for unity and understanding and peace" if they overthrow the Europeans and establish their own governments, he said.

**Ferries collide between Hong Kong and Macau in fog**

One hundred and thirty three people were injured, nineteen of them seriously, when two high-speed ferries travelling between Hong Kong and Macau collided in heavy fog on Friday. Ten crew members were also injured but no deaths have been reported.



*A Boeing 929 - 100 Jetfoil ferry operated by Turbojet. - Image: Toby Oxborrow.*

The two high-speed Boeing 929 - 100 Jetfoil hydrofoil ferries, Funchal and Santa Maria operated by Hong Kong-based ShunTak-China Travel Ship Management Limited (under the brand name TurboJet), collided five nautical miles away from Macau at around 8:30 p.m. local time. The incident has been confirmed by an official of the Maritime Administration of the Macau Special Administrative Region.

In Shanghai, a river ferry carrying twenty two people capsized in thick fog on Friday. Ten people are reported missing. Sixty six people were rescued after another ferry ran aground at Zhuhai near Macau.

**Today in History**

1842 – When he reached the safety of a garrison in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, William Brydon, an assistant surgeon in the British Army during the First Anglo-Afghan War, became the sole survivor of a party of over 4,500 military personnel and over 10,000 civilian camp followers retreating from Kabul.

1898 – The Paris newspaper L'Aurore published "J'accuse", an open letter by French writer Émile Zola to French President Félix Faure exposing the Dreyfus affair

1986 – A month-long violent struggle began in Aden, South Yemen between supporters of President Ali Nasir Muhammad and his predecessor Abdul Fattah Ismail, resulting in thousands of casualties.

1991 – The January Events: Soviet troops attacked Lithuanian independence supporters at the TV Tower in Vilnius, killing 14 people. January 13 is St. Knut's Day (Christianity-Scandinavia), Old New Year (unofficial Eastern Orthodox Church tradition)

**Quote of the Day**

The explorers of the past were great men and we should honour them. But let us not forget that their spirit lives on. It is still not hard to find a man who will adventure for the sake of a dream or one who will search, for the pleasure of searching, not for what he may find. ~ Sir Edmund Hillary

**Word of the Day**  
hostler n

1. A person employed at an inn, hostelry, or stable to look after horses; a groom.

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